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WEBER ON THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE TALMUD.*

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III. THE KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH.

a. THE MESSIANIC AGE.

The Messiah will bring all Israel to glory, dominion and spiritual perfection. This will be the work of the Messianic age, or of the days of the Messiah. With these days begins the "coming age" (*olâm habbâ*), the eternal life of which the prophets speak. At the end of the Messianic period follows the general judgment, and time then passes into eternity. The "coming age" stands in contrast to "this age" (cf. Lk. 12:30; 18:30; 20:34,35; Titus 2:12). The "Messianic age" is the period which ensues upon Messiah's coming, and includes his reign and reconstruction of the nation. It forms the introduction to the great *olâm habbâ* which includes both time (from Messiah's coming) and eternity in itself.

The duration of the Messianic period is variously stated. According to one view it was to be two thousand years, so as to make with the two thousand years before the law and the two thousand under the law, a sabbatic week of thousand-year periods, terminating in the great eternal Sabbath. Others say: forty years, in memory of the sojourn in the desert; others four hundred, upon the analogy of the period spent in Egypt. There are various other estimates.

It is noticeable that these computations rest upon supposed analogies drawn from some period of Israel's history. Redemption from Egypt remains the great historic type of the coming Messianic deliverance. "In any case the Messianic age is thought of as a definite period which brings to its conclusion Israel's history in this world, and is designed to be a preparation for eternity—a preparatory week for the eternal Sabbath."

b. THE BUILDING OF JERUSALEM AND OF THE SANCTUARY.

Since Jerusalem lay in ruins it has been the fixed hope of Israel that the nation should yet inhabit the restored city of God. Zion should be again a habitation and the righteous should dwell again in their former homes. The city should be rebuilt with new grandeur. The contrast is drawn between the Jerusalem of this world and that of the Messianic age (cf. Gal. 4:25). At the Messiah's advent, the city is to be rebuilt. It shall then become the seat of the Messianic reign and the metropolis of the world. It is to be reared in matchless splendor (cf. Rev. 21:10-21), adorned with sapphires, pearls and various precious stones. The "Sabbath-limits" of the city, twelve miles square, shall be full of precious stones. One rabbi says that, when in this world one man owes another, they go before a judge who sometimes makes peace between them, and sometimes not. Often the two come out from the hall of judgment without having become friends.

* Continued from October number.

But in the Messianic age, when one owes another, he will say: We will go and present the matter before the king, Messiah, in Jerusalem. But when they have proceeded as far as the Sabbath-limits of the city, they find them full of pearls and precious stones. Then the debtor takes up two of them and says to the creditor: "Do I owe you as much as these?" And the creditor answers: "No, not half so much. Let the debt be canceled; you are set free from it." That is what is written in Ps. 147:14, "He maketh peace in thy borders." So rich is Jerusalem.

The height and size of Jerusalem shall be stupendous. It will stand far above all its surroundings, and its extent will be so vast that it can embrace all the vast multitudes of restored exiles. It will extend to Damascus on the north and to Jaffa on the sea. The pre-eminence of Jerusalem in the Holy Land shall be matched by the pre-eminence of the temple within the city itself. The city is to be rebuilt for the sake of the temple which gives to it its worth and significance. The rearing of the sanctuary by Solomon and its reconstruction after the exile is followed by the building of the far grander "third temple" by the Messiah. To this end it has been enjoined that, since the destruction of the second temple, the Jew must never fail to petition in his prayers for the rebuilding of the temple.

In the Messianic age the temple shall stand in its full and destined completeness. The vessels that had been taken away shall be restored and the departed glories of the place shall return. The last sanctuary shall be incomparably more glorious than the first. It shall fulfill its destiny as the gathering place of all nations. Its height shall be such that all the world can see it. "For the Holy One will pile three mountains upon one another, Carmel, Tabor and Sinai, and upon the apex of this elevation will he build the sanctuary." Light shall stream forth from the temple and illumine all the world. It shall be the great center of praise to God. To the hymns which shall sound forth from it, all the mountains and hills shall make answer in refrain. Thus shall the sanctuary of the latter days fulfill its glorious destiny.

C. TEMPLE SERVICE AND THE LAW IN THE MESSIANIC AGE.

The temple service is to be restored in the Messianic age for the spiritual perfecting of the people. Moses and Aaron will return to earth and the former will re-instate the service and appoint and clothe the priests for their ministry. The people will perform their service in accordance with the law and the traditions. The great difference between the service of the past and of the coming age is that, in the latter, Jerusalem is to be the place of assembling for all nations and the sanctuary is to serve for the worship, not only of Israel, but of all the nations of the world. Still it is only for an elect company from Israel and from the heathen nations that participation in this worship is reserved.

In the new temple the law will be held in highest honor and will be explained to the people by Jehovah himself. The temple service will not, however, exclude the use of synagogues and schools. When the law is taken up in that good time a new light shall shine into it; it shall become a new law because it shall be better understood. In that time, also, shall the mysteries in the law become plain and the disputed questions shall be settled. "The law will be new because it will appear in a new, God-given light and will be newly and fully understood." The Messiah will also himself fulfill the law. (Cf. Matt. 5:17 sq.) There will also be a Sanhedrin in the new Jerusalem, but it will be extended to embrace all the righteous men who shall make the spiritual welfare of the community their care.

d. RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE COMMUNITY.

The Messiah is called "our righteousness" because he gives to the people righteousness before God through his own personal holiness, his intercession for the people and the leading of the people to the fulfillment of the law. Through the Messiah is peace made between God and his people. In the Messianic age men will neither merit a future recompense from observing the law nor acquire a burden of guilt by disobedience, because the fulfillment of the law will be immediately rewarded and sin immediately forgiven. The inhabitants of the new Jerusalem enjoy a condition of perpetual grace and peace in the possession of the rewards of righteousness and the joys of forgiveness. When this condition is established, then can the blessing of God flow unhindered in all its fullness over land and people. The "world-empire" and its bondage are no more and all is freedom and peace.

The order of the physical world will be the same as now, only the fruitfulness of the earth will be greatly augmented. "Every man can eat cakes and be clothed in silk." Wheat will mature in two months; vegetables in one. The length of life will be greatly extended. Statements are found that the people of God do not die in this age, and yet death is spoken of. This contradiction seems to be explained on the supposition that the heathen, who shall be the servants of Israel, shall die after long life, but that the people of Jehovah shall not taste death any more. Thus is made good the loss which was experienced in Adam's fall. Immortality is restored. Man is again lord of creation and enjoys the condition which was forfeited by sin, attaining his completion and the goal of all his hopes.

e. THE DOMINION OF THE MESSIAH OVER THE NATIONS.

The Messiah, the Son of David, is destined to be the ruler of the world. To his eternal reign the prophecies refer. His kingdom shall supplant the Roman empire and he shall reign over all peoples. The significance of this empire was that it was sent of God into the world as a punishment for Israel's sins. But for these sins this world-empire would never have arisen, but the kingdom of David and Solomon would have become a world-empire. "When now, finally, Israel's sin is forgiven, and peace restored, then the heathen world-empire has fulfilled its destiny; then can the kingdom of David and Solomon appear again, and now, indeed, in its character as world-empire. For the world-kingdom of the Messiah is the renewal and fulfillment of that of David and Solomon.

The Messianic kingdom shall be universal and unlimited. The whole earth shall be its realm. Yet Israel and the heathen nations shall not dwell together. No one shall dwell among the people of God who serves idols. So far as the nations remain idolatrous, they must dwell apart, but are under Israel's dominion; for "the world is created for the Messiah." Heathen peoples as such continue to exist. The relations of the Jews to these peoples is variously conceived. Some represent that all will become Jews and thus be incorporated into the people of God. Others speak of a missionary activity on the part of the Jews toward them. The Jews shall teach them the law in their theatres. Others emphasize the continuance of opposition. In general, however, the representation is, that an elect portion of the heathen shall be incorporated into Israel, but that the great mass shall identify themselves with that anti-Messianic power which is called Gog and Magog. They shall, however, be subject and tributary to Israel, her laborers and servants. All that Israel had lost at the hands of heathen nations shall be fully restored.

f. GOG AND MAGOG AND THE END OF THE MESSIANIC AGE.

A last attack upon the dominion of the Messiah is that which is designated as Gog and Magog. This conflict occurs at the end of the Messianic period, fills up the iniquity of the heathen and leads up to the judgment and the end of the world. It represents the transition from time to eternity, to the *olâm habbâ* in the narrower sense of the word. The time of Gog and Magog comprises seven years. The meaning of the term is defined by the statement that "an evil spirit enters into the nations and they rebel against the king Messiah. He, however, slays them, smiting the land with the rod of his mouth and killing the wicked one by the breath of his lips, and he leaves only Israel remaining." (Cf. Gen. 10:2; Exod. 38:2; 39:1,6; Ezek. 38:5; 39:2; also, Rev. 20:8; 2 Thess. 2:8.)

Some representations place the days of Gog and Magog at the beginning of the Messianic age. Accordingly it is said that there are four great manifestations of God: in Egypt, at the giving of the law, in the days of Gog and Magog, and finally, in the days of the Messiah. The prevailing view, however, would reverse the order of the last two and make this catastrophe the final conflict against Messiah's reign, the signal for the judgment and destruction of the heathen, and the last act in the great drama of human history before time is merged into eternity.

THE STORY OF SAMSON.

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Character of Samson.—A singular character is Samson of Zorah. How perplexing its combination of Nazarite austerity and grotesque hilarity, divine inspiration and animal cunning, dauntless bravery and ignoble sensuality, bodily strength and moral weakness. Samson is the muscular, intrepid, religious, rollicking Hercules of sacred story. Witness his leonine exploit in the vineyards of Timnah; his playful riddle at the marriage feast; his boyish stratagem with the three hundred foxes; his grotesque slaughter of the thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass; his prankish striding away with the gates of Gaza; his frolicsome amours with Delilah; his grim humor in the very act of suicide. Yet this man, so jovial and mettlesome and wayward, is mentioned in the New Testament muster-roll of the Old Testament Sons of Faith, enshrined in the catalogue which contains such saintly names as Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David and the prophets. Whenever we are tempted to pronounce an altogether unfavorable judgment, it is well to remember that there is One who (1 Sam. 16: 7) sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, while Jehovah looks on the heart. David was right (2 Sam. 24:14): It is better to fall into the hand of God than into the hand of man; for Jehovah's mercies are great.

Outline of Samson's period.—In studying the story of Samson, let us attempt a swift outline of his period.

Glance, first, at the moral aspect. It was a period of profound religious degeneracy. Although Joshua had nominally conquered the promised land, yet the conquest was far from being complete. The land was still infested with idol-